

**CITIZENS ADVISORY COUNCIL  
REGION 7 – MILES CITY  
MEETING NOTES  
August 11, 2010**

**CAC ATTENDANCE:** Robert Hagedorn, Julie Jordan, Chris Pileski, Dan R. Fox, Brett Hoagland, Art Hayes III, Warren Broeder, Rob Reukauf, and Bill Kesinger.

**ABSENT CAC MEMBERS:** Greg Mohr, George Luther

**FWP STAFF ATTENDANCE:** Brad Schmitz, Dwayne Andrews, Cathy Stewart, Erin O'Connor, and Mike Krings.

Brad began the meeting at Region 7 Headquarters by asking everyone to introduce themselves. He then gave a brief explanation of what the group's agenda would be for the day. Intentions was for the group to make stops at Rosebud Battlefield State Park, Tongue River Reservoir State Park, and several potential access sites on the Tongue River in the southern part of the region, with an evening barbecue at the Three Circle Ranch in Birney.

#### **Castle Rock Lake**

The group stopped briefly at Castle Rock Lake near Colstrip. Brad explained that the lake is a surge pond owned by PPL and maintained by the City. It is home to a broad variety of warm water fish species with good population numbers. Dwayne added that he holds a large Kids Fishing Day for Rosebud County youth there each spring with typically about 160 kids attending.

#### **Rosebud Battlefield State Park**

Cathy described the background of this park and some of the history of the area. The area where the park sits originally was part of the Slim Kobold ranch. It was also the location of the Battle of the Rosebud, or 'Where the Girl Saved her Brother.' This was the last battle that took place directly before the fateful Battle of the Little Bighorn.

The group then toured the park as Cathy pointed out some of the historical landmarks in the area including Crook's Hill, Lead Horse Ravine, and some pictographs that will hopefully be preserved at some point. The park also holds a buffalo jump that a University of Wyoming professor believes to be one of the oldest buffalo jumps in the world.

In the last approximately eight years, in addition to a lot of European studies of western battles, the area has also seen an amount of oil and gas exploration coming north from Wyoming. While the state owns the surface rights at the park, a lot of attention has been brought because of the federally-owned mineral rights.

Robert: Is there grazing allowed at the park and where do the funds raised from that go if so?

Dwayne: Yes, there is some grazing allowed. The area typically gets 15-19" of annual precipitation, so there is good grass production.

Cathy: The money from grazing does go back to the park. However, the management plan for the park has led to not as much grazing. There was a grazing permit put out for bid this year, but the bid winner hasn't used the park so far.

Dwayne: There isn't much water development in the park so producer can't go too far with their grazing.

### **Tongue River Reservoir State Park**

Cathy provided some background on the park. Tongue River Reservoir is the one of the highest visited parks in the state with about 100,000 visitors annually. Most of the year, the park sees about 40% nonresident use and 60% resident use, with it leveling out to about 50-50 the rest of the time. Annual revenue ranges from \$132,000-\$145,000. A reservation system will be implemented at the park next year for a certain percentage of sites.

Cathy talked about the many improvements at the park in the last few years, including the implementation of electrical sites. There have been problems, though, with water sources. The area experiences some methane gas release as evidenced in the lake at times.

The group then toured the various different parks sites surrounding the reservoir.

### **Coalbed Methane**

The group viewed a site containing several coalbed methane shacks. Brad talked about the shacks, how they work, their relation with water, etc. He explained that the department is mainly concerned with coalbed methane production because of the buildings, power lines and road constructed to service these sites and the effect they have on sage grouse, deer, elk and other wildlife populations.

### **Tongue River Dam**

The group viewed the dam and Art and Brad explained some of the history of it. The water that comes from the spillway into the river is fed from the bottom of the lake.

### **Tongue River access-Mars Property**

Brad showed the group a piece of the Tongue River where there is very limited access due to neighboring private land. The Mars Corporation and another neighboring landowner control access to most of the river in this particular area. Brad is hopeful that there will be cooperation with the Mars Cooperation to further expand access to this beautiful and productive stretch of river. The area is a great trout fishing spot that used

to be stocked but that action had to be ceased when access to the river became non-existent. Brad said we are slowly starting to gain access back.

Chris: What is the difference between the Big Horn River and the tail race here on the Tongue?

Brad: The Tongue is more characteristic of a prairie stream where the Big Horn has more actual river features.

Brett: How many miles of stream does the other neighboring landowner's property offer?

Art: About a mile and a half.

### **Tongue River Access-Diamond Cross Ranch Bridge**

Mike Krings explained the Stream Access Law to the group. House Bill 190, passed during the 2009 Legislative Session, confirmed that the public has access to surface water by public bridge or county right-of-way. FWP in cooperation with the affected landowner and county is responsible for providing public passage around or through a fence preventing such access. This particular site abutting to the bridge, owned by the Diamond Cross Ranch, is the only spot for floaters or other similar recreationists to get out of the river before Birney.

Mike then introduced Phill Wood, manager of the Diamond Cross Ranch. Mike has recently been in discussions with Phill about the possibility of installing a couple 6' gates to allow access to the river at this site. Phill has been very receptive to the idea.

Brad: He does not expect this site to become a full-time Fishing Access Site; that is not his or the department's intentions. There are five of these sites along the Tongue River.

Rob: What is Phill's opinion of this situation as a land manager?

Phill: He would like to work towards the best outcome for both parties. The ranch may even go so far as to deed some of the land to FWP or maybe even consider a conservation easement. He wants to work with both the Department and the public.

Dwayne: Does the ranch need signs at this site?

Phill: Yes, 'No Trespassing' and 'Pack in/pack out' would be good signs to have.

Brad concluded the discussion by saying that this is a great potential outcome for this site and that he would like to further visit with Phill very soon about the level of access the ranch is willing to allow.

### **Hanging Woman Creek Site (Hayes' Three Circle Ranch)**

The final potential access site that the group visited was Hanging Woman Creek on the Three Circle Ranch owned by Art Hayes and family. This creek site is 100 yards from the Tongue River and is another potential site for recreationists to be able to access the river.

Art Hayes Jr. joined the group at the site and helped to further expand the discussion about it becoming a potential Tongue River access point. It would not take much to make this a good access point for the public. The fence would need to be moved in one spot for parking purposes and a gate possibly installed is about all it would take.

Chris: Would it be possible for the CAC members to have a work day at this site to complete the work needed? There have been other work days for Block Management etc. that were very productive. Why couldn't the CAC do something similar?

Brad: This is a great idea and definitely something to consider.

Next meeting will be held at TBD date.